

SEEKING SPECIALIST HELP FOR CARE HOME RESIDENTS

A wide range of specialists from the health service and other organisations can be called upon to provide advice and therapeutic interventions (usually short term) for residents of Care Homes. Some of these specialists provide services specifically for Care Homes: a palliative care nurse specialist (North East only), Care Homes nurse facilitators (one North, one South) the Allied Health Professional Care Home Training Team, the Nursing Home Medical Practice, and hospital/Care Home liaison nurses. However there are other specialists who can be called upon to provide advice, assessments and interventions for residents of Care Homes in the same way as they do for people who live in their own homes. These include the Community Physical Disability Teams; specialist acquired brain injury services (both alcohol and non-alcohol related); consultants in rehabilitation medicine; WESTMARC; and outreach workers from voluntary organisations such as Scottish Huntington's Association and Epilepsy Connections.

A tradition appears to have evolved that the residents of Care Homes should be excluded from involvement by many of these specialists and also from participation in Chronic Disease Management programmes. As a result many – particularly younger residents have been unable to access services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, district nurses and nurse specialists for specific conditions. These barriers however appear gradually to be eroding, and efforts should continue to be made to ensure that the residents of Care Homes receive at least a good standard of care, support and access to lifetime opportunities as do people who live in their own homes.

In addition to specialists in the health service, there are many other individuals and organisations willing to provide services for Care Home residents – although some will require payment, at least expenses. These include art(s) and nurse therapists, complementary therapists (both qualified staff and those in training), horticulturists, entertainers, and volunteers.